

Dachshund History

The Dachshund was bred as a hunting dog and is known to have existed before the 16th century. In Europe during both World Wars, it was recognized as the national dog of the Teutonic Empire and, because of its German ancestry, was mistreated and even stoned in the streets. Today, the Dachshund enjoys great popularity and is known for its loyalty as a family pet.

The name Dachshund (dachs, badger; hund, dog) at once reveals and conceals the origin of the breed. In medieval European books on hunting, dogs similar only in possessing the tracking ability of hounds and the proportions and temperament of terriers, because they were used to follow badger to earth, were called badger-dogs or dachs-hund. A parallel is suggested by the current use of the name rabbit dog in various parts of this country for dogs of various breeding, used to hunt rabbits.

Illustrations dating from the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries show badgers hunted by dogs with elongated bodies, short legs, and hound-type ears some with the bent front leg of a basset, some with the head of terriers, and some with indications of smooth and long coats. It is well to consider that these illustrations were made before the days of photography that artist capable of depicting dogs with anatomical fidelity have always been rare, and that woodcuts do not lend themselves to fine reproductions of coat distinctions. At best, the pictures and descriptive words can be interpreted with certainty only as defining the functions of the dogs used on badger.

The preponderance of available evidence indicates that smooth and longhaired coats were separated by selective breeding, long prior to recorded registrations; whereas within such recorded history, the wirehaired coats was produced for protection against briar and thorn by crossing in harsh, wiry terriers coats and then breeding out incompatible characteristics of conformation. Early in the seventeenth century the name Dachshund became the designation of a breed type with smooth and longhaired-coated varieties, and since 1890 wirehairs have been registered as the third variety.

The badger was a formidable twenty-five to forty-five-pounds adversary. Strength and stamina as well as keenness and courage above and below ground were required of badger dogs. Weight of thirty to thirty-five pounds was not uncommon. Such Dachshunds in packs also were serviceable against wild boar. With this start the breed was adapted to hunt other game. A smaller sixteen to twenty-two pound Dachshund proved effective against foxes and trail-wounded deer. Still smaller twelve pound Dachshunds were used for stoat and hare. In the first quarter of the twentieth century, for bolting cottontail rabbits, miniatures with adult weights under five pounds and chest girths under twelve inches, but with plenty of hunting spirit, were produced.

Before the German Dachshund or Deutscher Teckelklub was founded in 1888, racial characteristics, or a standard for the breed had been set in 1879; and German registration of Dachshunds was included (not always with complete generation data or systematic coat notations) in a general all-breed stud book, the Deutscher Hundestammbuch, whose first volume, in 1840, recorded fifty-four Dachshunds and the names of several subsequently prominent breeders, and whose publication continued until officially terminated in 1935.

Importation of Dachshunds into this country antedates the earliest American dog shows or studbooks, and eleven were included in AKC Stud Book, Volume 11 in 1885. American dogs have found little employment in organized hunting, as we lack in the badger and wild boar and do not hunt deer with dogs, nor foxes with pick and shovel. The true character and conformation of the breed have been encouraged by frequent importation of German hunting strains; and to encourage hunting capacity and exemplary conformation and temperament, field trials under AKC rules were instituted in 1935.